



ILLINOIS RETIRED TEACHERS ASSOCIATION

Northwest Suburban - Unit 90

<http://www.irta-unit90.org>

PRESIDENT'S REPORT

March 4, 2015

DATES TO REMEMBER

March 16 (M) – Area II Conference

June ? – Summer Luncheon

September 17(Th) – Day at the Races

PRESIDENT'S REPORT

I wish to welcome you to another exciting year with Unit 90 and to encourage you to become involved with our various programs and activities. Recently we were forced to cancel our trip to see “Tommy” in Aurora. The Executive Board is asking for input regarding our trips and events. We need to know whether or not our planned trips and outings are serving our members. To find out what trips we have done in the past, click on various years at <http://www.irta-unit90.org/events>. Please send your input and suggestions to Reinhard Taylor at herrtaylor@comcast.net. We value your input and suggestions.



This year we have our annual summer and holiday luncheons and the annual Day at the Races in September planned as well. We look forward to seeing you at all of our Unit 90 events! Of course, you are always invited to join us on the first Wednesday of every month (except no meeting in July and December) for our executive board meetings at the Arlington Heights Senior Center in Room 172 starting at 10 AM. Thanks for being a member of Unit 90 and the Illinois Retired Teachers Association.

FOURTEENTH ANNUAL DAY AT THE RACES

Retired teachers and their guests are invited to attend the Fourteenth Annual Day at the Races on Thursday, September 17, 2015 at the Arlington Park Racecourse. The cost of \$65.00 per person includes complimentary general parking, admission to the racecourse, the Daily Racing Guide and a lavish two-hour buffet, including classic beverage package, wine, and soft drinks in the International Room. For reservations, send your check, made payable to: “Northwest Suburban IRTA Unit 90” to Rich Chierico at: 1453 East Norman Drive, Palatine, IL 60074, by Tuesday, September 8, 2015. For further information, contact Rich at (847) 358-7816.

Note: Preferred self-parking is closer to the entrance for a cost of \$5.00. Valet parking at the clubhouse entrance is available at a cost of \$10.00 per car.

TRS REPORT by Bob Lyons, Elected Annuitant, TRS Board



The Illinois Supreme Court has announced it will hear oral arguments in the pension overhaul case on March 11 at 2:30pm. The 2013 law was designed to close a \$111 billion deficit in the combined pension systems by reducing benefits of active and retired teachers and other public employees. The State's argument is really quite simple. They are saying, "Based on the Illinois Constitution the State cannot cut pension benefits – unless it really needs to." That is the argument they will present to the Illinois Supreme Court.

Early on in your teacher preparation if that had been the way the pension guarantee had been explained to you, would you still have taken the job? And that is the first problem Attorney General Lisa Madigan and her people have in making this argument because that is not what teachers, university professors, and state employees were told when they were hired. All of us learned at some point in our careers that our contracts could not be abridged, and that very specifically our pension benefits could not be diminished or impaired. Period. There was no reference to "unless, of course, that we cannot afford to pay the benefits."

And since the position of the State's lawyers is not helped if it is the result of the State's own acts or failures to act that resulted in the required pension payments growing to a size greater than their existing means to pay, they will try to convince the Court that is not the State's fault. There will be no mention of the many billions of dollars Illinois should have put into the pension systems but instead spent elsewhere. The State argues in its brief that the financial credit crash and the Great Recession of 2008, a cause totally outside their control, resulted in a pension debt that threatens the State's very existence. The rather obvious difficulty in selling that explanation is that it does not fit the facts. When the Illinois Constitutional Convention identified the problem in 1970 the combined pension were funded just over 41% and as of the end of June 2014 they were at 42.9%.

Ultimately for the Illinois Supreme Court to rule in the State's favor a majority of the judges must say it is totally impossible for the State of Illinois to make its required actuarial payments to the state pension funds and thus they can cut benefits. I suppose the State could argue that since in its total history they never actually have made a full actuarial payment that that certainly proves that they cannot. But an acceptance by the Court of that argument would quickly fill the Illinois Court system with bankruptcy claimants. That you did not try to pay is hardly proof that you cannot pay. I fully expect the judges to vote 7-0 in favor of the legal concept that the pension protection clause says exactly what is written. Illinois pension benefits cannot be diminished nor impaired.

The State of Illinois Supreme Court ruled on the case regarding State retiree health insurance, Kanerva vs. Weems, last July over a year after they heard the arguments. Considering that the Illinois Supreme Court adopted a broad interpretation of the Pension Protection Clause in that suit that fully supports the interpretation advanced in our case, Heaton v. Quinn, I would hardly think the Court would need many weeks to resolve the issue in our favor given the similarities between the two cases.

The fact that you are reading this now means that you belong to the IRTA, but have you contributed to our Legal Defense Fund? More than a half of million dollars has been contributed, and we will all gain when our benefits have been made safe, but have you helped to make that happen? I hope so. **See next page.**

IRTA LEGAL DEFENSE FUND

It is very expensive to hire one of the highly regarded law firms in the State to represent retired educators and defend retired educators' benefits in the courts. To date, the IRTA Legal Defense Fund has received \$549,222 from voluntary contributions of its members and has spent \$432,719 for the same period. Please send a donation, in any amount to:

**IRTA
620 North Walnut Street
Springfield, IL 62702**

Checks should be made payable to the: **IRTA Legal Defense Fund**. Or, you can go to:
<http://www.irtaonline.org> and go to the home page and look under "Events" to donate online. **Thank you!**

VOLUNTEERS NEEDED

The opportunities to volunteer with Clearbrook are endless. Clearbrook's mission is to provide innovative opportunities, services and support of people with disabilities. Their facilities are located in Chicago, Cook County and in all the collar counties (including Kendall) and they operate residential facilities in 17 suburban communities so you can find something convenient. You can work with any age individual you prefer since Clearbrook clients range from birth to death. Following are some of the programs that use volunteers: The "Take a Break Program" provides respite relief for families of children with special needs and, following training, requires a four-hour weekly commitment for a six month period. The "Take a Break in the Afternoon" program is for families who have not yet been accepted into the "Take a Break Program". This meets in various locations once a week; parents can drop off young children for up to three hours where staff and volunteers provide activities and care for the children. Clearbrook's Day Program sites need volunteers during the day, evenings and weekends to assist with feeding or to participate in activities designed to enhance clients' productivity and socialization. Volunteers may accompany clients on outings or organize a cleanup/beautification project at residential or day care locations. For further information check the Clearbrook website (www.clearbrook.org). To volunteer, contact Kathy Scheuing, Volunteer Coordinator, Clearbrook, 1835 W. Central Road, Arlington Heights, IL; phone - 847-385-5016 or email at kscheuing@clearbrook.org.

Membership Offer

Any state IRTA member who is 90 years of age or older is eligible for free state membership. To receive your free membership send me your birthdate and I'll register you. Bobby Reinhardt, 964 Burgess Cir, Buffalo Grove, IL 60089 or email me at burgesscir@earthlink.net

Unit 90 WEBSITE: www.irta-unit90.org

If you have not done so yet, please check out the NEW Unit 90 website, which includes current information on the following topics: Executive Board members and meeting minutes, the latest IRTA Call to Action, GPO/WEP Issues, IRTA Foundation Scholarship information, TRS reports and pension concerns, legislative updates, and Unit 90 events with photos! Our thanks go to the Webmaster, Reinhard Taylor.

If you want an up-to-date electronic directory (pdf file) just e-mail your request to Reinhard Taylor at: irta-unit90rtaylor@comcast.net.

YES THERE ARE TWO IRTAs

The umbrella state organization, and the local Unit 90.

The confusion is understandable, but that's the way it is...

When I first retired I didn't realize that I had only joined the local unit. Others join the State and don't realize that the entire organization is made up of 93 individual units. But to correctly support our cause as retired educators, one should belong to both parts. One wouldn't exist without the other. Our common goal is defending our well-deserved pensions and to stay informed and united against those who want to abridge our constitutionally guaranteed benefits.

Membership forms are available on our website at <http://www.irta-unit90.org>

Advantages of IRTA Membership

Advocacy....Awareness....Socialization....Products and Services

1. Serves as a “watchdog” on the state legislature and monitors the progress (or lack) of those bills that directly affect retired teachers.
2. Represented in the General Assembly by the executive director and lobbyist.
3. Offers a wide range of member benefits from reduced insurance rates to travel savings, to medical and financial aid, to dental plans, to auto insurance, to computer discounts, plus many other benefits.
4. Makes available the services and vast resources of the IRTA office in Springfield for research, data, statistics, and information.
5. Keeps members topically informed through the IRTA’s Action Bulletin.
6. Offers financial assistance through the IRTA Foundation.
7. Puts members in direct contact with other retired teachers through the 93 individual IRTA Units throughout the state.
8. Keeps members informed and up-to-date via its website: <http://www.irtaonline.org>
9. Allows for instantaneous messaging to your local legislators on issues that affect teachers through the use of VoterVOICE.

NORTHWEST SUBURBAN – UNIT EXECUTIVE BOARD - 2014

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Vice President: Liz White

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